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Interviewee:
Interviewer:

Sam Magruder
Jim Stone

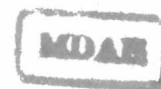
Title: An interview with Sam Magruder, September 14, 1973 /
interviewed by Jim Stone

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MAGRUDER, Sam

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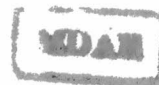
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NARRATOR: Col. and Mrs. Sam Magruder
INTERVIEWER: James Stone, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
DATE: September 14, 1973
PLACE: The Magruder Home, Port Gibson, Mississippi
SUBJECT: Windsor Ruins, Port Gibson, Mississippi

Stone: This is Jim Stone, of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History interviewing Colonel Sam Magruder. I think we should be informal about this. Basically what I am down here for is to pick your brain, and find out what we can about Windsor, the furnishings, outbuildings, anything that you can tell me - where things are - just anything you can. And if you would, if you don't mind, begin telling me what you can remember about the area of Windsor, where the orchards, outbuildings, gardens, cisterns and things like that were.

Magruder: Well, my recollections, of course, of Windsor or my authority on this is just what I can remember that my mother, who was Katherine Green Daniell, and my great aunt, who was Priscilla Daniell Magruder - great-aunt Priscilla Daniell Magruder was the oldest daughter, the oldest child of Smith Coffee Daniell II. According to my memory, the house faced out toward the big live oak tree that is still standing on the grounds around Windsor. And to the right, where the pond presently is, was the orchard area. On the other side, I believe, was the garden. How the house was built or what was in it - I cannot recollect anything from my mother and my great-aunt, and what they said. However, I do remember that they said the four sides went up; and the roof went up in four sides and at the top was a glass observatory. The little incidents that happened there...my grandfather, Thomas Freeland Daniell, he was named for his grandfather, Thomas Freeland - this is where the Freeland and Daniell come in. Catherine Freeland married Smith Coffee Daniell. She was the mother of Priscilla Daniell and Thomas Freeland Daniell and Smith Coffee Daniell III. My grandfather, Thomas Freeland Daniell, was born in 1852, approximately that time...'53. He was about eight years old during the War Between the States. It was told me by him and also my great-aunt who was about thirteen or fourteen during the War Between the States, Priscilla Daniell, an incident after the Battle of Port Gibson during Grant's Vicksburg Campaign. Grant landed at Bruinsburg which was due west of the home, and marched up through there. At this time, my grandfather was a young boy. They had some nice horses, one called Aladdin. His horse was confiscated by one of the generals in Grant's Army; my sister thinks that his name was Clark, however; he later became military governor of Louisiana. He took this horse, and my grandfather, who had very good command of plain ordinary profanity at the age of eight years called him all sorts of things including a thief - screamed at the horse to throw him in the pond. After the War, this general sent my grandfather a \$150.00 check to pay for the horse. He stated in his memoirs, and I will have to try and locate this, that the only time in his life that he had ever been called a thief and the only time that he ever felt like a thief was when he took this young rebel boy's horse.

My grandfather returned the money to him and would not accept it. After the Battle of Port Gibson they used the porches of Windsor for a hospital for the Federal troops that were wounded during the Battle of Port Gibson. They had two sentries stationed there, armed sentries. One was on duty in the day and one at night. The family became very attached and fond of the sentry, and I don't recall his name. However, this sentry went in with the family every night for family prayers. He went in and joined the family. One night as the sentry was leaving family prayer - he walked out first - some Confederate had slipped into the house and shot him as he was walking out of the room, the parlor where they were having family prayer. My grandfather, eight or nine years old by this time, was walking right behind him. They laid him out on the sofa in the hall and, according to my great-aunt who was a very pious woman, my grandfather cursed, prayed and cried all in the same breath. My grandfather was very fond of this man. The sentry died. There was a threat to burn Windsor, but after investigation they found there was no complicity in the family. The family was just as horrified that this had happened as the troops were, and they continued using it for a hospital, and then moved on out. The next little thing I remember...my mother telling me when Windsor burned...that she was there...everyone rushed outside. Some carried...a few grabbed whatever they could get their hands on...the items existing today that came out of Windsor are rather astonishing. My great-aunt Priscilla got her diamond and she had a diamond cross that had seven diamonds in it. It went to my two sisters, and they have used it as engagement rings for their daughters-in-law or daughters, I guess. My sister Agnes Coleman has two vases, very pretty, though chipped some, and a fruit compote, I guess you would call it that, a large compote for fresh fruit, and also a chaise longue that came out of Windsor. My mother recalled and told me a number of times about standing under the big live oak tree out front and weeping because her dolls were burning there in Windsor. These are the little things that I remember. Also, we had a nurse we called Mammy. Emily was her name, and I don't know her last name. She was a playmate of our great-aunt. She...after the Union troops came through, she went north a year and came back and remained at Windsor until her death. She nursed my mother when she was a baby, she nursed my sisters, my brothers, down including me. We called her Mammy or Aunt Emily. She lived to be about ninety-five years old, and even up until the last few years of her life, she could be sitting flat on the floor and would jump right up; she was as strong as could be. I can remember getting very seriously reprimanded by Mammy, or Aunt Emily, once when I mentioned slaves on the place, and she very sternly told me they were not slaves, they were the family's people, and that is what they were, and not slaves. "We weren't slaves, we was the people of the family." Now going back to the Civil War - War Between the States as I was taught to call it by my history teacher, Katie Headley - on top where the roof came up there was a glass observatory. It was used by the Confederate forces to signal troops across the river on the Louisiana side. The flag was still there when the house was occupied by the Federal troops, and the family was very

concerned that they might find these and burn the house down. They didn't find them. One story also my grandfather told me was about meeting Mark Twain. He went as a young man to Kentucky Military Institute and played baseball; and he was at a baseball game once and met Mark Twain, and he asked him, "Where are you from?" He said, "I'm from Mississippi, Thomas Daniell." Mark Twain said, "Oh, yes, you live in the big house on the bluffs above Bruinsburg." There are stories that Mark Twain considered it a girls' school; but from what my grandfather told me, he knew exactly who owned it and what it was while he was a pilot on the Mississippi River. I don't know the date of this, but this was one of the stories that he told me. That's about all I can remember. Tom Freeland, I don't know if you know Tom or not....

Stone: I haven't met him.

Magruder: Tom says that he has the original Spanish land grant to the Freeland family, but he won't let anyone touch it.

Stone: Sam, do you think if you talked to him, or I talked to him just right he would turn loose of it in exchange for us laminating the thing and having the opportunity to copy it?

Magruder: I don't know. He is very sensitive about it. It wouldn't do any harm. I tried to get him out here, but I haven't been able to reach him.

Stone: As I understand it, the thing is folded.

Magruder: He is afraid it will fall to pieces.

Stone: It can be, as you know, technology for preserving these manuscripts is pretty well advanced. And we can tape the thing; and even if it did come apart unfolding it, they can take it and laminate it out flat. I assume that he would rather have it that way, anyway. He is just scared that he will break the paper up by doing it.

Magruder: He is afraid that it will...but if you can't read it....

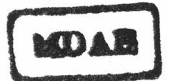
Stone: There's not much use in having it.

Magruder: He thinks that Windsor came to the Daniell family, it was given...was a what do you call them? The bride's dowry. However, Joe Drake, in researching the title of Windsor, came up with the will of Thomas Freeland, died 1856. In his will he left half the plantation, left his plantation to his children, Sarah Buckner, Frisby Freeland and Catherine Daniell, one-third each. I believe that this - and I will give you this - was the survey that was made of the land because it was a Smith Daniell who purchased from Sarah Buckner and Frisby Freeland their one-third interests. Therefore, the land was owned two-thirds by Smith Daniell and one-third by his wife Catherine. That can be researched. There is quite a bit of...on Windsor and the Daniell holdings in the book Louisiana and Mississippi Border Country, which again...and I am not casting aspersions

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at Smith Daniell, but I think most of her authority on this was Smith Coffee Daniel IV, and when he was over eighty years old; and Smith was born in mid or late 1880s; and consequently, his memory of Windsor, the house and so forth, would have been fairly limited.

Stone: Sam, I want to ask you one thing specifically...there are some pieces of furniture floating around that were in Windsor. Can you tell me about them? Who has them?

Magruder: The only piece of furniture that I know about is the chaise longue that my sister owns - Mrs. F. O. Coleman - Agnes Magruder. She lives just next to us here.

Mrs. Magruder: I had an uncle - check with John Montgomery, he made a drawing when he was thirteen years old when he was at Albena Plantation. Mrs. Magruder was ill, but John has had this consuming interest in an authentic drawing of Windsor, so he would draw and send it to her, and she would either say yes, that's the way she remembered it or no, that was totally wrong; and he made the doors and a window over the doors different from any sketches that we have seen...different from anybody else's sketches. And he said she told him, and Sam, you remember this too, the room, the Captain's walk on the top of the house - observatory, whatever you want to call it - had the same...just like the main part of the house ...not like the concepts that we have seen. John said he was going to refine the drawing and never did, but he still has it and it would be a good idea to get hold of it, and maybe we can persuade him to refine it. Because she told him many details on windows that are not on anybody else's drawings, before it gets lost; they haven't taken care of the drawing.

Stone: Does he have that in Jackson?

Mrs. Magruder: No, it's right here.

Stone: It is at his father's place?

Mrs. Magruder: Yes, because he showed it to us, and Sam looked at it and said it seemed to be more what he remembered Auntie and Mom talking about than any of the other sketches that we have seen. A few of the sketches are too rigid, there is no feeling about them. The house was definitely built with some sort of movement. It wasn't so grim looking.

Stone: I always thought that Bob Howie's drawing was horrible! I don't normally go around telling this....

Mrs. Magruder: John may be home today.

Stone: I am just down the street from him on North State.

Mrs. Magruder: He never refined the drawing before she died, but he did have details that nobody else had. I think he could do a much more authentic drawing.

He has always planned to. He would laugh about it, too. Would you be interested in seeing it today?

Stone: Maybe I had better check with John.

Mrs. Magruder: I will just call and ask Estelle. If he doesn't want it shown, then she won't show it. You know, she is very aware of his feelings. He even remembers things that Miss Kate told him that he hasn't even put in there.

Magruder: I can remember my mother saying there were artichokes in the garden at Windsor, big bushes of them. I have tried to raise them here with very little success, maybe not the right variety.

Mrs. Magruder: I think maybe these are too refined, can't tolerate the heat or the wet. Seems to be the wet. I wonder if he had a lattice house. He had formal gardens. I wonder if he had a lattice house...for the garden, flowers that were put in.

Magruder: I have no idea.

Mrs. Magruder: That would be an interesting question to ask Katherine, if she remembers anybody talking about it. There must have been a spring house somewhere, because they raised everything. They were practically self-sufficient. There must have been a smoke house, spring house....

Magruder: Yes....

Stone: ...Mill somewhere, also.

Mrs. Magruder: If there was a smoke house, the foundation would be somewhere, wouldn't it? And a spring house, too.

Stone: Not necessarily close to the house...probably not.

Mrs. Magruder: How far away were the slave quarters from the house, do you know?

Magruder: No, no idea.

Mrs. Magruder: That's something else to think about it.

Magruder: Grandpa was very small at the end of the War...he inherited from his grandfather the quarters and there was a tremendous oak tree and also there must have been twenty cisterns at the quarters.

(End of Side One)

Magruder: ...Told us in casual conversation; we were not researching. It was just family conversation. Going back to the story of the reservoir. Windsor

did have plumbing and after or during the occupation of it by the Federal troops, the plumbing system was taken out. It was reasonable to assume that the pipes in it were lead pipes as they use even today in a lot of the French homes, and lead was at a premium for making minie-balls. Each soldier had his own minie-ball mold. Very probably this is what happened. There were two water reservoirs, up on one of the top floors, filled by rain water and provided the flowing water for the plumbing system of the house, simply operated by gravity. After they took the pipes out, not having any others at this time, they used those as kind of an indoor swimming pool. I imagine they were square tanks; my great-aunt remarked that they swam in them. Now, what else?

Stone: I understand there are some family portraits around; who has them?

Magruder: Katherine Whitfield who lives in Port Gibson has two, and I don't remember who they are of. Agnes Coleman has two portraits of my grandfather, Thomas Daniell and my aunt Priscilla when they were about six, seven or eight years old. My brother, Thomas Magruder, has an original old map of Windsor which he has framed in his home in McComb, Mississippi.

Stone: I assume he would let us copy it.

Mrs. Magruder: I also understand that he has the cast iron column...how many were there...somebody must have wanted them bad because you know how heavy they were.

Magruder: I understand one is on a house in Houston, Texas; an oil truck came through and the truck was one of these big ones and they loaded up a column and took it off. There has been a great deal of vandalism over the years...I don't know about that. They have taken away the steps and railings...one pair of steps is at Alcorn College, and railings, also.

Mrs. Magruder: You told him what happened to the others?

Magruder: During the Depression my great aunt...Windsor was not of any terrific historic interest to anyone in the 1920s, late '20s, and there was a man who came by and offered her twenty to thirty dollars a ton for the scrap iron and she sold it to him; however, she didn't collect in advance. He broke the steps up, and he hauled them off and he disappeared. He got the ones on the lower floor.

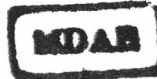
Mrs. Magruder: Tom does have quite a few pieces of the iron...Tom Magruder...and he has all the sherds they dug up. You will have to talk to him about the big excavation they had over there. He was under the impression that there was a cellar. They cleared down to the basic brick floor, the bottom floor of the house; and they probed down to it, and they found no place or way for a cellar.

Magruder: I was told by my great-aunt that there were two solid silver services in the family silver, and that they burned up, and there was a lot of

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looking around there; maybe somebody found where the silver melted and collected it. We have no idea of that. The family china, which we have one coffee cup, according to my great-aunt was one thousand pieces, made in England specially for the house. And it had the family monogram - SCD - on the china.

Mrs. Magruder: It was pink with gold trim, pink bordered.

Magruder: The fire burned this pink and turned it black, and it was some type of pigment....

Stone: I notice that on several pieces of sherd that you have, the pink has turned.

Magruder: Very possibly...no indication of who made it...couldn't find any on the sherds. As good records as the British keep this could be determined.

Stone: I think that's possible.

Mrs. Magruder: I went through...to see if I could find a piece with the pink color and the monogram. They found in digging it out what must have been the pantry, not the kitchen. I think in those days the kitchen would not have been attached to the house; at least, I don't think so. They found the china pantry. Apparently the china had just come down, bam! They found it in a rectangular area enclosed in the columns though, so it was part of the main house, and my niece, Kate, who is an art student was desperately trying to salvage pieces. She would dig them up, a platter, but it would be in fifty pieces. Before she could get them marked, people were scooping them up and throwing them up and throwing them in sacks and she could not keep one piece together.

Stone: Where is the large collection of these sherds?

Magruder: Magruder in McComb.

Mrs. Magruder: He has a whole barrel. Kate has them spread out on a ping-pong table in their garage and she was determined to get one piece put together, even if we had to file down some edges to make it work. We found a piece that was obviously a sauce boat in those days. One thing she found was a huge platter that was just there, but maybe in fifty pieces. Did they find cooking utensils?

Magruder: I don't think they did. Some old farm equipment, which he has some of.

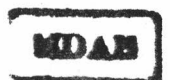
Mrs. Magruder: They determined...this was the china pantry. They thought they would find silver there, too. It was logical that it would be stored in the same area, but they did not come across any metal of any kind, no pewter, nothing of metal. He even had a metal detector there, but found none of it. I think for years and years people have systematically sifted through. I feel there may be pieces around the area that are from Windsor.

- Magruder: This is the picture of Thomas Freeland who did own Windsor. I gave you when he died his will that he willed it to his three children; and Smith Daniell bought the two-thirds interest, and his wife had the other one-third.
- Stone: Where is the original?
- Magruder: Tom Freeland has it.
- Stone: I want to ask you one more thing...aside from the records that we have at the Archives, do you know of more, aside from the grant that you have already told me about? Is that all? Diaries, anything?
- Magruder: No, I don't. My sister has two diaries of Aunt Priscilla, more of a personal diary in the early twentieth century.
- Stone: Do you think she would have written anything about Windsor in them?
- Magruder: She wrote a beautiful, but completely illegible hand.
- Mrs. Magruder: It was very interesting to me to try to determine where the family went after Windsor burned down. It burned down in the middle of the day. They had to go somewhere that night.
- Magruder: China Grove.
- Mrs. Magruder: But that's not where they ended up living, according to Katherine...ended up living at Retreat owned by....
- Magruder: ...One of the family properties....
- Mrs. Magruder: We understand they did not move into the main house. This was a question bothering Katie Headley. Where did they live at Retreat? Katherine says that she remembers Auntie saying they moved into the overseer's home at Retreat, and they never tried to rebuild anything of a house on Windsor. It is difficult for me to understand. Nor did they enlarge the overseer's home. Here they had moved out of that tremendous mansion, moved into an overseer's house, and that's the way they lived.
- Magruder: They didn't have all the servants that they had before, and a smaller house was much more....
- Mrs. Magruder: The end of the Civil War and the fire on top of that seemed to destroy any incentive to do anything except to survive. They tried to replace nothing from what we can understand. Where the family went from there....
- Magruder: At Albena that was Magruder, too, through Sims. My great-aunt Priscilla lived with us.
- Mrs. Magruder: Aunt Priscilla ended her days at Albena. It was built around 1840.

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Magruder: On one of the windows at Albena, and I think it has been broken since because I have looked and haven't been able to find it, was William Mac D. Sims written on the glass with a diamond ring, and he was my great-grandfather on the Magruder side.

Mrs. Magruder: It was interesting to note the Daniells ended their lives somewhere else. They never tried even to build a cottage.

Stone: There was a terrible depression in the 1890s, just awful, almost as bad as the '30s. I would like to add that Mrs. Ottie Lee Redus has a collection of old photographs of Windsor that we haven't seen yet.

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